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ABSTRACT

Eight Chinese daily newspapers were content analyzed to determine the role and functions of the Chinese press in the United States. The papers studied were based in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, and were dated from Novemer 1 to November 6, 1982. The results indicated that the Chinese press did not pay much attention to the local Chinese community--the "Chinatowns." Instead, the papers gave a large amount of space to coverage of China and Taiwan, the two "home countries" of the Chinese immigrants in America, and Hong Kong, the largest Chinese community outside China and Taiwan. The findings suggest that the Chinese press serves as a linkage to the past for the Chinese immigrants who came to the United States from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. (Author/HTH)

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The Chinese Press in U.S.: A Linkage to the Past

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The Chinese Press in U.S.: A Linkage to the Past

While other ethnic newspapers in the United States seem to be on the decline,[1] the Chinese newspapers are flourishing. The past few years have seen several new papers published. Although a complete list of the Chinese newspapers published currently in the United States is not readily obtainable, it is reported that there are 24 newspapers serving the Chinese community.[2] Because the majority of the Chinese population settled in four major cities -- Houston, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco, it is natural that the Chinese newspapers are clustered in these four areas.

The establishment of Chinatowns and the steady influx of the Chinese immigrants over a period of more than one hundred years ensure the existence of the Chinese press. According to the 1970 U.S. census, the Chinese had a population of 435,062 and were the second largest Asian-American ethnic group in the United States, ranking only below the Japanese. In the 1980 U.S. census, the Chinese population jumped to 806,020, an increase of 85 percent over the last decade. As a result, the Chinese outnumbered the Japanese and became the largest Asian-American ethnic group. Among the Chinese are the second and third generations of the early immigrants and hundreds of thousands of newcomers from Hong Kong, China and Taiwan.[3]

The emergence of the Chinese press is a corollary of two things.

First, since the early days many of the Chinese immigrants have had a limited ability to read and write English. Second, the metropolitan media have often ignored the ethnic minorities in the United States. The Chinese are no exceptions. For example, Mu has found that the Chinese community in New York has been largely ignored by the New York Times over a period of 80 years.[4]

During the past years a limited number of studies have examined the Chinese newspapers in the United States.[5] Several publications have also provided information about the Chinese press.[6] However, these publications cannot be considered complete and, to some extent, dependable. For one thing, many Chinese newspapers are not included. The 1981 Ayer Directory of Publications, for example, listed only seven Chinese newspapers in the United States, while the actual number was more than that.

Of those limited number of studies, most of them either failed to look into the content of the Chinese newspapers or were limited in scope. Data provided in these studies are also outdated. At a time when the Chinese newspapers are evolving, little is known about the role and function of the Chinese press in the United States. In this regard, McCue and Parker shed some light on the problem. Examining only the Chinese dailies in New York city, McCue indicated that there was little news of importance about the local Chinatown.[7] He said coverage of the Chinese community was usually confined to the official activities of the major establishment organizations. Parker suggested that the Chinese press, in attempting to answer the unique informational and social needs of

its readership, remains "an important, evolving, and expanding institution in the Chinese community."[8] In a related study, Hur reported that "the Asian American press seems to meet the information needs of both the first-generation Asian immigrants and the later generations by providing news of their own community and 'mother country' either in their own mother language, in English, or in both."[9]

One of the major characteristics of the Chinese newspapers in the United States is that of its connection with China and Taiwan. As a matter of fact, some of the early Chinese newspapers were published for political purposes. For example, supporters of the Ching Dynasty published the Chinese World (Mon Hing Yat Pao) in 1891 to counter the revolutionary movement led by Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, father of the Chinese Republic, who started in 1910 the Young China Morning Paper, one of the oldest Chinese newspapers in the United States.[10] Over the past decades the situation facing the Chinese press has basically remained unchanged. Because of the ideological dispute and power struggle between the Communist party on the mainland China and the Nationalist party on Taiwan, nearly all the Chinese newspapers published in America are involved in one way or another in the political movement in China and Taiwan. The Chinese papers thus tend to take sides in their identification with "China." When one deals with the Chinese press in the United States, it is therefore necessary to look at the content of the news about China and Taiwan, the two "mother countries" of the Chinese immigrants.

The purpose of this study is to determine the role and function of the Chinese newspapers in the United States. Specifically, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

(1) What are the major areas of coverage in the Chinese press?

(2) What is the theme of coverage about the local Chinese community?

(3) What is the theme of news about China and Taiwan?

The Method

There are twelve Chinese dailies in the United States. This study examines eight of them.[11] The eight newspapers selected for analysis are Centre Daily News (New York), China Post (New York), Chinese Times (San Francisco), China Tribune (New York), International Daily News (Los Angeles), Peimei News (New York), United Journal (New York), and Young China Morning Paper (San Francisco). No daily newspapers are published in Houston. Most of the above papers have East coast and West coast editions.

The content analysis uses the news item as the coding unit. Each news item is measured in square inches. If a picture is part of a news story, it is measured along with the body of the story. Otherwise, pictures are excluded. The measurement of space includes the headline. Every news item in the eight Chinese dailies was recorded during a one-week period (November 1 to November 6, 1982).[12] The study period was picked without any particular events in mind in September, 1982. As it turned out, news in this one-week period happened to include the defection of a Communist China pilot to

Taiwan and the negotiation of the future status of Hong Kong between British officials and the Chinese government in Peking. Nevertheless, these events did not necessarily occupy a large amount of space given to coverage of China and Taiwan in the eight newspapers during the study period.

To determine the geographical area of coverage in the eight Chinese newspapers, the following categories were selected:

(1) Local Chinese Community: news about the local Chinatown;

(2) Metropolitan Area: news about the metropolitan city in which the Chinatown is a part;

(3) Other Chinatowns: news about the Chinatowns other than the local one;

(4) U.S. National and State: news about the local state and other U.S. cities and national affairs;

(5) China: news about the People's Republic of China;

(6) Taiwan: news about the Republic of China on Taiwan;

(7) Hong Kong: news about the British colony;

(8) International: news about areas and countries other than the last three categories.

Any news item which did not fall into any of the above eight categories was recorded as "Other" and excluded from analysis.

News about the local Chinatown was also coded in terms of the following thematic categories:

(1) Economics/Business/Labor;

(2) Crime/Violence/Police;

(3) Human Interest/Festival/Celebrations;

(4) Education/Culture/Art;

(5) Politics/Government/Election;

(6) Groups/Organizations/Social Activity;

(7) Entertainment.

If a news item about the local Chinatown could not be coded into any of the above categories, it was treated as miscellaneous and discarded from further analysis.

In this study the "mother country" of the Chinese immigrants refers to both China and Taiwan. Since they represent a very different system as to political, economic, and social development, news about China and Taiwan was recorded and analyzed separately, using the following same thematic categories:

(1) Politics/Government/Military;

(2) Economics/Business/Trade/Labor;

(3) Education/Art/Culture/Sports;

(4) Technology/Medical/Science;

(5) Crime/Violence/Police;

(6) Human Interest;

(7) Other.

For the reliability of the analysis, two Chinese graduate students were asked to code 20 randomly selected news items. Using the Holsti's formula,[13] the coder reliability coefficient is .85 for the first thematic category and .93 for the second thematic category.

The Results

During the study period the eight Chinese dailies devoted a total of 32,381 square inches to news coverage, with an average of 4,048 square inches per paper. In terms of area coverage, Table 1 reports the results.

Table 1 about here

At first look, news about U.S. national and state affairs was given more space (24%) than each of the other areas under study. However, if space given to China and Taiwan, the two "mother countries" of the Chinese immigrants in the United States, was combined, news about the "mother country" then received more than one-fourth (26%) of the total news space in the eight newspapers during the one week period. Space devoted to Hong Kong, the largest Chinese community outside China and Taiwan, accounted for 19 percent. As homeland of the majority of the Chinese immigrants in America, these three areas occupied nearly half of the total news space in the eight Chinese newspapers.

The Chinese community in the United States, that is, the Chinatowns which support the existence of the Chinese press, received only eight percent of the total news space in the papers, the least coverage of the areas under study. Excluding other Chinatowns, coverage of local Chinese communities by all papers accounted for six percent, or 2,000 square inches, of the more than 32,000 square inches. The Peimei News and the United Journal are the only two papers that gave at least ten percent of their news space to local Chinatown affairs. On the other hand, two papers, the Centre Daily

News and the International Daily News, paid almost no attention to the local Chinatown on their news pages.

The space given to the different areas seems to reflect the structure of the Chinese press in the United States. For example, the only Chinese daily owned, edited and published by American citizens, the Chinese Times appears to be domestically oriented, giving more space to news about the local state and U.S. national affairs than to the other areas. As can be seen from Table 1, about 50 percent of its news space dealt with this category. The result is consistent with Parker's finding that in 1978 40 percent of the news space in this paper was devoted to U.S. national news.[14] An interesting finding is that the Young China Morning Paper, the official organ of the Nationalist party on Taiwan in the United States, gave a relatively small amount of space (7%) to coverage of Taiwan while devoting more than one-third of its news space to U.S. national and local state affairs.

Table 2 indicates the mean size of news items devoted to the eight areas. It shows that stories about the Chinatowns were somewhat shorter than stories about the state and U.S. national news, China, Taiwan and Hong Kong for most of the eight papers. On the whole, news stories concerning the Chinese origins were relatively longer than those about the other areas.

Table 2 about here

As is evident, with respect to the geographical area of news coverage, the data suggest that during the study period, the eight

newspapers were more concerned with where the Chinese came from, namely, the "mother country" -- China and Taiwan taken together, and Hong Kong. They also gave a relatively large amount of space to U.S. domestic news. It is apparent that the Chinese community in the United States received the least attention in the eight dailies.

Since the Chinatowns provide the main financial resources for the Chinese press in America, news about the local Chinatown was examined in terms of seven thematic categories. Table 3 gives the results. Of the 2,006 squre inches given to coverage of Chinatown, economics/business/labor accounted for 24 percent, followed by groups/organizations/social activity (23%), crime/violence/police (20%), and politics/government/election (19%). The results seem to mirror the nature of the Chinatowns in the United States, which are basically commercially oriented and centered around the major organizations such as the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association. The relatively high percentage of space given to coverage of crime-related issues may be an indication that the American Chinatowns are still troubled by criminal activities such as gang war and robberies which have been a major concern of the Chinese community since the early years.

It is worth noting that all eight newspapers paid attention to coverage of groups/organizations/social activity. In a sense, this confirms McCue's observation that news about local Chinese community was usually concerned with the major establishment organizations.[15] In summary, it is clear that during the study period, with regard to coverage of local Chinatown, the Chinese press focused its attention

on things that most concern the Chinese community.

Table 3 about here

As mentioned previously, China and Taiwan represent two different systems. News about these two "mother countries" of the Chinese population in the United States was therefore measured separately. The comparison is reported in Table 4.

On the whole, the eight dailies gave more space to Taiwan than to China (5,400 square inches for Taiwan compared to 3,000 square inches for China). Looking at the individual papers, six out of the eight dailies devoted more than half of their space about the "mother country" to Taiwan. The difference seems to reflect each paper's connection with either China or Taiwan. For example, the Peimei News favors the government in Peking over Taiwan. Its space given to China is almost three times the size of space devoted to Taiwan. On the other hand, the Young China Morning Paper, an organ of the Nationalist party on Taiwan, gave only 13 percent (34 square inches) of the total 267 square inches to China, but devoted 87 percent or 233 squre inches to Taiwan during the study period. Another newspaper that gave China more space is the United Journal which is considered neutral in terms of its political stand. Regardless of content, it can be said that Taiwan did better in the Chinese press in the United States than did China.

Table 4 about here

Table 5 shows the focus of attention in the eight newspapers'

coverage of China and Taiwan. Roughly speaking, for all eight papers the major concern is politics/government/military affairs. For instance, more than 50 percent of the newspapers' coverage of China and 38 percent of their coverage of Taiwan fell into this category. The striking difference is that 21 percent of the dailies' coverage of Taiwan dealt with crime/violence/police, while only seven percent of the newspapers' coverage of China was coded into the same category. News about economics/business/trade/labor affairs in the eight newspapers' coverage of China and Taiwan also occupied a relatively large amount of space. In overall comparison of coverage between China and Taiwan, the pattern is quite different. For coverage of China, the eight papers focused their attention on politics/government/military affairs, followed by economics/business/trade/labor issues, education/art/culture/sports, technology/medical/science, and crime/violence/police. As to coverage of Taiwan, politics/government/military also received the most attention in the eight newspapers, but was followed by crime/violence/police, economics/business/trade/labor, human interest, and education/art/culture/sports.

Conclusion and Discussion

One conclusion comes easily: The Chinese press in the United States does not pay much attention to the local Chinese community; rather, it appears to function as a linkage to the past for the new Chinese immigrants by providing news about the "mother country." This may be an indication that, as Chu and Kuai reported in 1982, the Chinese press is no longer "the Chinatown press" which catered

to the older generations of the early Chinese immigrants. Instead, the Chinese press seems to meet the various needs of the newcomers from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, who have in one way or another maintained cultural, economic and political ties with both China and Taiwan or either side. It is no wonder that almost all the eight newspapers under study have news sections devoted exclusively to coverage of the three areas.

This study has also found that attention given to coverage of China and Taiwan in the eight newspapers is not similar. Nevertheless, news about China and Taiwan is concerned primarily with political and economic issues. Considering the fact that the Chinese press in the United States is inextricably linked with either China or Taiwan, this seems understandable. At a time when both Communist China and Taiwan are striving for the political and financial support of the Hua Chiao (the overseas Chinese) in the United States, who played an important role in Dr. Sun's overthrow of the Ching Dynasty in 1911,[16] there should be little surprise that this is the case.

Judging from the results, there are some implications. First, the Chinese community in the United States has largely been ignored by the Chinese press. It can be argued that the needs and perspective of the Chinese immigrants seem to be of little concern to the Chinese newspapers. The consequence of such ignorance of local Chinese community by the newspapers needs to be further investigated. But, there is little doubt that, being the largest Asian-American ethnic group, the Chinese have been denied access to both the ethnic press

and the metropolitan newspapers.[17] Second, the majority of the Chinese daily newspapers in the United States clearly gives more attention to coverage of Taiwan than to China. This means that the government on Taiwan will have more opportunity and access to appeal to the Chinese population in the United States for the support of its policies. Third, while there is lack of direct evidence, what the content of the Chinese press has shown is that, by inference, the Chinese population in the United States is still not a part of mainstream America though the Chinese have a long history of immigration.

Table 1: Space (in Percent) Devoted to Area by Each Newspaper

	Centre Daily	China Post	China Tribune	Chinese Times	Intern'l Daily	Peimei News	United Journal	Young China	Total Square Inches	% of Total
Local Chinatown	0.7	8.8	4.9	9.1	0.4	15.2	10.1	6.0	2006	6.2
Metro Cit.	10.8	12.1	10.2	9.1	7.6	11.0	7.7	16.7	3326	10.3
Other Chinatown	0.4	0.3	1.1	5.2	1.5	0.7	0.7	4.1	573	1.8
U.S. National & State	19.1	10.0	6.0	49.2	32.7	19.6	10.6	34.7	7817	24.1
China	4.9	10.8	8.1	2.6	9.5	14.3	25.3	1.0	3028	9.4
Taiwan	17.7	14.3	38.5	5.4	23.0	4.9	18.9	7.2	5403	16.7
Hong Kong	31.6	26.9	23.1	3.8	16.4	25.6	18.0	13.9	6301	19.5
International	14.8	16.9	8.1	15.5	8.9	8.5	8.7	16.4	3927	12.1
Total	100%	100.1%*	100%	99.9%*	100%	99.8%*	100%	100%		100.1%*
Total Square Inches	4549	3536	3439	4551	6137	3084	3837	3248	32381	

* Rounding error

Table 2: Mean Amount (in Square Inches) Devoted to Area by Each Newspaper

	Centre Daily	China Post	China Tribune	Chinese Times	Intern'l Daily	Peimei News	United Journal	Young China
Local Chinatown	8	15	17	14	9	19	11	14
Metro City	15	13	12	9	17	14	10	18
Other Chinatown	17*	9*	19	17	8	11	13	11
U.S. National & State	16	13	15	15	17	14	13	15
China	14	14	10	17	13	11	17	34*
Taiwan	14	12	18	16	18	14	18	23
Hong Kong	15	15	11	19	17	12	17	20
Intern'l	11	11	13	10	12	11	14	10

* Figure may be misleading since it reflects only a single item.

Table 3: Space (in Percent) Devoted to Local Chinatown by Theme

	Centre Daily	China Post	China Tribune	Chinese Times	Intern'l Daily	Peimei News	United Journal	Young China	Total Square Inches	% of Total
Economics	0	16.3	22.6	21.2	0	43.4	14.7	19.5	476	23.7
Crime	0	33.7	29.8	0	0	26.6	31.7	0	403	20.1
Human Interest	0	0	0	9.6	0	3.2	4.1	0	71	3.5
Education	38.7	0	0	11.8	0	0	1.3	0	66	3.3
Politics	29.0	26.0	29.2	10.3	0	15.5	22.9	17.4	378	18.8
Groups	32.3	14.7	4.8	47.1	100.0	3.8	13.1	55.9	464	23.1
Entertainment	0	9.3	0	0	0	3.2	7.0	7.2	85	4.2
Other	0	0	13.7	0	0	4.3	5.2	0	63	3.1
Total	100%	100%	100.1%*	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%		99.8%*
Total Square Inches	31	312	168	416	26	470	388	195	2006	

* Rounding error

Table 4: Space (in Percent) Devoted to China and Taiwan by Paper

	Centre Daily	China Post	China Tribune	Chinese Times	Intern'l Daily	Peimei News	United Journal	Young China	Total Square Inches
China	21.6	43.1	17.4	32.9	29.2	74.4	57.3	12.7	3032*
Taiwan	78.4	56.9	82.6	67.1	70.8	25.6	42.7	87.3	5402*
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Total Square Inches	1025	887	1605	365	1995	594	1696	267	8434

* Because of rounding error, these figures do not correspond to the figures reported in Table 1.

Table 5: Space (in Percent) Devoted to China and Taiwan by Theme by Paper

	Centre Daily		China Post		China Tribune		Chinese Times	
	I[a]	II[b]	I	II	I	II	I	II
Politics	57.9	40.2	48.2	18.2	49.5	39.5	14.2	30.2
Economics	24.0	1.7	33.2	4.8	24.4	41.6	0	30.6
Education	16.7	5.8	10.7	7.9	14.7	6.2	0	0
Technology	0	4.1	5.5	0	0	7.6	27.5	0
Crime	0	35.9	0	50.3	11.5	0	58.3	32.2
Human Interest	0	10.7	2.3	18.8	0	0.9	0	6.9
Other	1.4	1.9	0	0	0	4.1	0	0
Total	100%	100.3%*	99.9%*	100%	100.1%*	99.9%*	100%	99.9%*
Total Square Inches	221	804	382	505	279	1326	120	245

a China
b Taiwan
* Rounding error

Table 5: (Continued)

	Intern'l Daily		Peimei News		United Journal		Young China		% of Total	
	I[a]	II[b]	I	II	I	II	I	II	I[c]	II[c]
Politics	62.3	33.4	28.1	23.0	58.1	54.1	100.0	69.1	51.2	38.4
Economics	8.6	7.7	32.4	77.0	14.1	4.1	0	15.0	19.1	17.6
Education	9.3	14.6	11.1	0	5.9	0	0	0	9.2	6.9
Technology	8.4	4.7	16.3	0	10.2	5.5	0	15.9	9.0	5.1
Crime	8.2	30.7	1.4	0	6.0	11.3	0	0	7.0	21.1
Human Interest	3.3	8.4	3.8	0	1.1	17.5	0	0	1.9	8.4
Other	0	0.6	7.0	0	4.6	7.4	0	0	2.6	2.4
Total	100.1%*	100.1%*	100.1%*	100%	100%	99.9%*	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total Square Inches	583	1412	442	152	971	725	34	233	3032	5402

a China
b Taiwan
c Spearman rank order correlation coefficient: .37, not significant at .05 level.
* Rounding error

Footnotes

1 See Jacquelyn Ernalee Pledger, Foreign Language Newspapers in the United States, Unpublished master thesis, Indiana University, 1964.

2 James Chu and Kuai Liang, "Chinese Newspapers Flourishing in U.S.," Editor & Publisher, March 27, 1982, pp. 42, 47. Twelve of the 24 newspapers are published daily.

3 Newsweek, December 6, 1982, pp. 39, 41-42, 51.

4 Chin-Yao Mu, "Coverage of Chinese Americans in the New York Times, 1900-1980," Unpublished master thesis, the University of Texas at Austin, August, 1982.

5 Edward Hunter, In Many Voices: Our Fabulous Foreign-Language Press, Norman Park, Georgia: Norman College, 1961; K. Kyoon Hur, "Asian American Media and Audiences: An Institutional and Audience Analysis," Paper presented to the Mass Communication Division, International Communication Association Annual Convention, Minneapolis, Minnesota, May, 1981; Leo W. Jeffres and K. Kyoon Hur, "The Forgotten Media Consumer -- the American Ethnic," Journalism Quarterly, Spring 1980, 57, pp. 10-17; Shao-Huang King, A Study of the Chinese-Language Press and the Chinese Community in the United States, Unpublished master thesis, Southern Illinois University, 1965; Andy McCue, "Evolving Chinese Language Dailies Serve Immigrants in New York City," Journalism Quarterly, Summer 1975, 52, pp. 272-276; Robert E. Park, The Immigrant Press, New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1922; Elliott S. Parker, "Chinese Newspapers in the United States: Background Notes and Descriptive Analysis," Paper presented to the Minorities and Communication Division, Association for Education in Journalism Annual Convention, Seattle, Washington, August, 1978; Paul Slater, "San Francisco's Chinese Newspapers: A Lingering Institution," Journalism Quarterly, Autumn 1969, 46, pp. 605-607; James En-Wei Wang, Chinese Newspapers in the United States, Unpublished master thesis, University of Missouri, 1968.

6 Harry A. Johnson (ed.), Ethnic American Minorities, New York: R. R. Company, 1976; Beverly J. Fike (ed.), The Working Press of the Nation, Volume I: Newspaper Directory, The National Research Bureau Inc., 1981, pp. VI2-3; Paul Wasserman and Jean Morgan (ed.), Ethnic Encyclopedic Directory of Ethnic Newspapers and Periodicals in the United States, second edition, Littleton, Colo: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1976; 1981 Ayer Directory of Publications; 1980 Editor & Publisher International Yearbook.

7 McCue, op. cit.

8 Parker, op. cit.

9 Hur, op. cit.

10 The Young China Morning Paper: 50th Anniversary (1910-1960) (in Chinese), The Young China Publication Co., 1961 (?).

11 Four other newspapers were not selected: China Daily News, China Times, Sing Tao Jih Pao, and World Journal. When the data collection started, the China Times has just been published. Daily News (New York) was not available for this study. The other two papers are sister publications of newspapers in Taiwan and Hong Kong. They were not included for analysis because of their extensive use of news facsimile from their sister papers in the two areas.

12 Although it is desirable, a constructed week for all the papers was not feasible for the present study. Due to limited accessibility and availability of some of the newspapers under study, only five issues were analyzed for each paper.

13 Ole R. Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities, Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1969.

14 Parker, op. cit.

15 McCue, op. cit.

16 The Young China Morning Paper, op. cit.

17 See, for example, Mu, op. cit.